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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 SAM-01 DHA-02 OMB-01 /073 W
---------- 099889
R 030500Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1944
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONGEN CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMCONGEN LAHORE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, BG
SUBJ: THE EMERGING BANGLADESH POLITICAL SPECTRUM

REF: DACCA 3857

1. SUMMARY. UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES REGULATION, PARTY ORGANIZATION HAS BEEN UNDER WAY DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST. ABOUT TWENTY GROUPS HAVE SUBMITTED CONSTITUTIONS AND MANIFESTOS FOR APPROVAL, BUT NONE HAS YAW BEEN GIVEN OFFICIAL SANCTION. THESE ARE PREDOMINANTLY CENTER AND RIGHT WING ROUPS, BUT MANIFESTLY THERE ARE TOO MANY TO PERMIT AN ORDERLY POLITICAL PROCESS. SOME WILL BE DISQUALIFIED ON VARIOUS GROUNDS, SME WILL PROTEST THE STRINGENCY OF THE REGULATIONS, SOME WILL EVEN SEEK THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE PROMISED ELECTIONS. THE PICTURE IS BLURRED. END SUMMARY.

2. POLITICAL PARTY ORGANIZATION WAS ALLLOWED TO GET UNDER WAY "INDOORS ONLY" DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST BY THE
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POLITICAL PARTIES REGULATION (PPR) ISSUED JULY 30 (REFTEL).

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DURING THE MONTH MORE THAN TWENTY PARTIES HAVE WRITTEN DETAILED CONSTITUTIONS OR MANIFESTOS FOR GOVERNMENT APPROVAL. BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN COMMONLY ACCEPTED IN DACCA THAT ONLY ABOUT FOUR POLITICAL PARTIES WOULD BE GIVEN GOVERNMENT APPROVAL, NUMEROUS PERSONALITIES AND FACTIONS HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATING WITH ONE ANOTHER, HOPING TO FORM BROAD COALITIONS AND FEVERISHLY DRAFTING PARTY MANIFESTOS SUFFICIENTLY SPECIFIC BUT ALSO SUFFICIENTLY INNOCUOUS TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT. PRESENTLY THESE MANIFESTOS ARE BEING SUBMITTED, AND WITHIN THREE WEEKS, ACCORDING TO THWDPPR, THE BDG WILL ANNOUNCE ITS LIST OF APPROVED PARTIES. FOLLOWING ARE SOME POLITICAL NOTES ON THE CURRENT SCENE AT THE END OF THE FIRST MONTH OF PARLOR POLITICS:

3. THE LIMITED SUCCESS OF KHANDAKAR MUSHTAQUE AHMED. WHEN MUSHTAQUE STEPPED DOWN FROM THE PRESIDENCY LAST NOVEMBER, THERE WERE MANY WHO SPECULATED THAT HE WISHED TO PRESERVE HIS PRESTIGE AS BG'S LEADING POLITICIAN FOR A LATER DAY. HOWEVER, AFTER MONTHS OF SILENCE AND SOLITUDE, MUSHTAQUE'S EFFORTS IN ORGANIZING HIS OWN POLITICAL PARTY, THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATS, HAVE NOT BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL. HE HAD REPORTEDLY HOPED THAT SEVERAL TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC LEADERS, LIKE KHAN A. SABUR, AND OTHER ISLAMIC GROUPS SUCH AS THE NEJAM-E-ISLAM, THE JAMAT-E-ISLAM AND THE KHELAFAT-E-RABBANI, WOULD JOIN HIM IN A NEW PARTY, BUT HE HAS APPARENTLY RECEIVED LITTLE SUPPORT FROM THIS SIDE OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM REPORTEDLY BECAUSE THROUGH THE YEARS HE DID NOT CULTIVATE THE ISLAMICISTS SUFFICIENTLY. FURTHERMORE, MODERATE AWAMI LEAGUERS ARE HISITANT TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH MUSHTAQUE BECAUSE OF AN ALLEGED ASSOCIATION WITH THE MURDERS IN DACCA JAIL LAST NOVEMBER. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD THAT ATAUR RAHMAN KHAN, FORMERLY A CLOSE ASSOCIATE, HAS FALLEN OUT WITH MUSHTAQUE AS HAS GENERAL OSMANI, WHO FEARED THAT HE WAS BEING USED MERELY FOR HIS NATIONALIST IMAGE.

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AID-05 SAM-01 DHA-02 OMB-01 /073 W
---------- 100170
R 030500Z SEP 76
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1945
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMCONGEN LAHORE
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4. THE GROWING POPULARITY OF THE ISLAMIC RIGHT. AS MUSH-
TAQUE'S STAR IS FADING, THE ISLAMIC STAR SEEMS TO BE
RSING. IT IS TO BE NOTED THAT THE PREVIOUS BAN ON PARTIES
WITH RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION HAS BEEN LIFTED AND THAT TWO
SIGNIFICANT ISLAMIC PARTIES ARE NOW FORMING, THE BANGLADESH
MUSLIM LEAGUE OF K.A. SABUR AND THE ISLAMIC DEMOCRATIC
LEAGUE, CONSISTING OF THE NEJAM-E-ISLAM, THE JAMAT-E-
ISLAM AND THE KHELAFAT-E-RABBANI. OF THESE TWO, THERE ARE
GROWING REPORTS THAT SABUR, THOUGH EDERLY, IS RECEIVING
SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT AND THAT HIS PARTY WILL BE GIVEN OFFICIAL
SANCTION BY THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, IT IS NOT YET CLEAR
IF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC RIGHT IS AS STRONG AS IS
THE SENTIMENT IN ITS FAVOR.

5. REVIVAL OF THE AWAMI LEAGUE. NOTWITHSTANDING THE
AFTER EFFECTS OF MUJIB'S ASSASINATION, THE AWAMI LEAGUE
APPEARS TO HAVE RETAINED THE MOST WIDESPREAD PARTY ORGANI-
ZATION IN THE COUNTRY. ALTHOUGH THE NOMINAL HEAD OF THE
PARTY IS NOW THE OLD LINE AWAMI LEAGUER ABDUL MALEDK UKIL,
FORMER SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT, THE REAL POWER LIES WITH
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MIZANAR RAHMAN CHOUNDHURY, A FORMER MINISTER OF INFORMATION
AND BROADCASTING UNDER SHEIK MUJIB. HOWEVER, THE PARTY
EFFECTIVENESS MAY BE HURT BECAUSE OF AN INTERNAL STRUNGGLE
WITH A BAKSAL FACTION LED BY MOHIUDDIN AHMED, AN OPPORTUNIST
WHO WAS PREVIOUSLY A MEMBER OF NAP/B AND NAP/N BEFORE
JOINING THE AWAMI LEAGUE IN 1972. THE BAKSAL FACTION IN
GENERAL REPRESENTS THOSE WHO SUPPORTED SHEIK MUJIB, ARE MORE
LEFTWARD LEANING AND TEND TO LOOK FOR MORAL SUPPORT FROM
INDIA. THE BAKSAL FACTION PROBABLY WILL NOT SPLIT FROM THE
NEW AWAMI LEAGUE BECAUSE IT WOULD NEVER BE SANCTIONED AS A
SEPARATE PARTY.

6. THE FACTIONALISM OF THE JATIYA SAMAJTANTRIC DAL (JSD).
ONLY WEEKS AGO, MOST OF THE TOP LEADERS OF THE JSD WERE CON-

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VICTED OF CONSPIRACY TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT IN A SECRET MARTIAL LAW TRIAL. WHAT LEADERSHIP REMAINS IS FRAGMENTED. UNLIKELY AS IT MAY SEEM FOR AN UNDERGROUND OPPOSTION PARTY WITH ITS TOP LEADERS CONVICTED OF CONSPIRACY TO APPLY FOR GOVERNMENT Z NCTION, THERE ARE PRESS REPORTS THAT AT LEAST A FACTION OF THE JSD UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF M.A. AWAL, A PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER, WILL SUBMIT A PARTY CONSTITUTION FOR BDG APPROVAL. SOME SPECULATE THAT IF THE JSD WERE ALLOWED TO FUNCTION OPENDLY, RATHER THAN UNDERGROUND WHERE IT ELICITS STUDENT SYMPATHIES, THE PARTY WOULD SOON FOLD. THERE IS ALSO CONSIDERABLE EXPECTATION THAT WHEN OUTDOOR POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS AUTHORIZED LATER THIS FALL, AT LEAST SOME FACTIONS OF THE JSD WILL BE HIGHLY DISRUPTIVE, POSSIBLY TO FORCE THE POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS IN WHICH THEY HAVE SLIGHT PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS.

7. THE CONFUSION OF THE LEFT. BECAUSE OF THE EXTREME FACTIONALISM ON THE LEFT, THE DETAILS OF PARTY ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP ARE UNCLEAR. NAP/B, THE DISPARATE COLLECTIONOF PUTATIVE PRO-PEKING LEFTISTS UNDER THE NOMINAL LEADERSHIP OF MAULANA BHASHANI, HAS BEEN REORGANIZED BY MASIUR RAHMAN, WHO EMERGED AS THE PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY AFTER A BITTER INTERNAL PARTY STRUGGLE IN 1974 OVER WHETHER THE PARTY SHOULD SEEK INFLUENCE THROUGH ACCOMMODATION OR CONTINUE A MORE IDEOLOGICALLY PURE STRUGGLE FOR A CLASSLESS SOCIETY. MASHIUR RAHMAN AND DR. ALEEM-AL-RAZEE LED THOSE WHO ARGUED FOR MODERATION AND ACCOMMODATION. THEIR OPPONENTS, KAZI
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ZAFAR AHMED AND RASHID KHAN MENON, EVENTUALLY SPLIT IN 1974 FROM NAP/B TO FORM THE UNITED PEOPLE'S PARTY (UPP). REPORTS INDICATE THE KAZI ZAFAR AND MENON WILL NOW SUBMIT A CONSTITUTION FOR A REORGANIZED UPP. HOWEVER, DR. ALEEM-AL-RAZEE HAS APPARENTLY ABANDONED MASHIUR RAHMAN IN ORDER TO FORM HIS OWN PARTY, THE BANGLADESH PEOPLE'S LEAGUE. DETAILS OF ITS ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT ARE SKETCHY. ANOTHER WELL-KNOWN LEFTIST, MOHAMMAD TOAHA, HAS BEEN CITED IN PRESS REPORTS TO BE LEADING A REVIVED SAMAYABADI DAL (MARXIST-LENINIST), A PARTY WHICH HAS BEEN UNDERGROUND SINCE BANGLADESH INDEPENDENCE. FINALLY, THE VENERABLE MONI SINGH, RECENTLY RETURNED FROM ALMOST A YEAR IN INDIA AND THE USSR, IS REPORTEDLY ORGANIZING HIS COMMUNIST PARTY OF BANGLADESH, KNOW IN EARLIER DAYS FOR ITS PRO-MOSCOW ORIENTATION.

8. COMMENT. THE POLITICAL SITUATION REMAINS BLURRED. NO ONE APPEARS CERTAIN YET WHICH PARTIES WILL SURVIVE THE GOVERNMENT SCREENING OR PRECISELY WHO THE EVENTUAL LEADING CANDIDATES WILL BE. AND, SHILE MANY OBSERVERS HAVE BEEN SURPRISED THAT PREPARATIONS FOR THE FEBRUARY ELECTIONS

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HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO PROGRESS AS FAR AS THEY HAVE,
THERE IS STILL A LINGERING SUSPICION THAT GENERAL ZIA
AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WILL YET
FIND IT EXPEDIENT TO POSTPONE THE ELECTIONS BEYOND
FEBRUARY, PERHAPS MUCH BEYOND.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY ORGANIZATION, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 SEP 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DACCA04588
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760334-1077
From: DACCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760994/aaaadclg.tel
Line Count: 229
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 DACCA 3857
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 MAY 2004 by ElyME>; APPROVED <07 SEP 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
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04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE EMERGING BANGLADESH POLITICAL SPECTRUM
TAGS: PINT, BG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006